

MEDITATION, BODY SCAN, AND LOVINGKINDNESS MEDITATION

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Meditation

Just allowing your eyes to close, and beginning to tune in to your breath. Just beginning to track the physical sensations, particularly in the abdomen, that accompany the breath. Just this breath in. Just this breath out. Just beginning to ride the waves of the breath. Perhaps noticing the pause at the end of each in breath, and the slightly longer pause at the end of each out breath. Just beginning to be at the pace of the breath, which is generally slower than the pace of the busy mind.

Full Body Scan

Now imagining that just above your head is a golden white light, that brings with it relaxation and quiet attention. Now imagining that this light moves into the top of your head, and then down across your forehead. Into the muscles around your eyes, into your cheeks, into your jaw muscles, letting your tongue relax, letting all those tiny facial muscles relax.

Then this golden white light moves down the back of your head, and down your neck, and then out across the tops of your shoulders. As this light then moves into your upper arms, and down to your elbows, into your forearms, and down to your wrists, and into your hands, to your knuckles, and out to the tips of your fingers, as your head and shoulders and arms relax.

This golden white light then moves into the back of your shoulders, which is your shoulder blades, and then it begins to fill your chest and lungs, and moves down into your solar plexus, and down into your belly, as these areas also relax. This light then moves into your upper back, into your mid back, into your lower back, and then all the way down to your coccyx at the base of your spine, as these areas also relax.

This golden white light then moves into your buttocks, into your genitals, into your thigh muscles, into your quadriceps muscles, and into your hamstring muscles, as these areas also relax. This light then moves into your calf muscles, and down into your Achilles tendons, into your ankles, into your feet, and then all the way out to the tips of your toes. Then as this light exits out the bottoms of your feet, you feel your whole body go limp and slack, and you relax even more.

Head to Toe Body Scan

Now imagining that you could take in a breath, as if through the bottoms of your feet, and then all the way up into your chest on the in breath, and then imagining that that breath exits out the top of your head through an imaginary blow hole about the size of a quarter on the out breath.

As the next breath comes in as if through that imaginary blow hole and moves down into your chest on the in breath, and then that breath moves down the trunk of your body and exits through the bottoms of your feet on the out breath.

As the next breath comes in through the bottoms of your feet and moves up into your chest on the in breath, and again the breath exits through the imaginary blow hole at the top of your head on the out breath. Then continuing to breathe in this same manner, as if the breath could move from the top of your head to the bottoms of your feet, and back, and letting go and relaxing a little more with each out breath.

Lovingkindness Meditation

Lovingkindness and compassion towards myself
 May I be free from suffering, free from ill will
 May I be happy.

Lovingkindness and compassion towards those I love and care about
 Towards my friends and family, near and far
 May they be free from suffering, free from ill will
 May they be happy

Lovingkindness and compassion towards the people of this city, this state, this country
 Lovingkindness and compassion towards all beings everywhere
 May they be free from suffering, free from ill will
 May all beings everywhere be happy, may all beings everywhere have peace

Meditation

Perhaps returning your attention to the breath at the abdomen. Noticing again the abdomen rising with each in breath, and falling with each out breath. Noticing if the breath is different than when you began.

Thich Nhat Hahn teaches a meditation which goes:
 Breathing in, I calm my body
 Breathing out, I smile—with a little half smile
 Breathing in, I calm my body
 Breathing out, I smile—and feel the facial muscles relax
 Breathing in, I calm my body
 Breathing out, I smile—with a little Mona Lisa smile

So we practice with the breath, as it is always available. The breath has been used for at least several thousand years as an object of attention. We can utilize the breath in any moment, when we are agitated, or anxious, or bored. If you are sitting at a red light, or standing in a line at the store, rather than being anxious or bored, you can simply tune into and track the breath.

It helps to have a practice for keeping track of the breath, as we are all so easily distracted. One way is to silently note “rising” when the abdomen rises with the in breath, and then silently note “falling” when the abdomen falls on the out breath. Whenever we get distracted, usually by thinking, and forget about the breath, we non-judgmentally bring the mind back to “rising” and “falling.”

Alternatively, we can count the breaths, by silently noting “rising” on the in breath, and counting “one” on the out breath. Then noting “rising” on the next in breath, and counting “two” on the out breath. Continuing in this way up to a count of “eight,” and then returning to the first breath. If at any point we get distracted and forget about the breath, we can always return to the first breath.